

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method of annotating electronic messages with reference to electronically displayed documents comprising the steps of:

providing on a visual display an electronic document comprising a page of displayed content, wherein the displayed content comprises a plurality of subject items;

encoding a plurality of the subject items in a computer readable format;

displaying a list of encoded, subject items;

choosing an encoded, subject item;

connecting to the chosen item a text annotation;

displaying the text annotation and its connection to the chosen item;

whereby the annotation and its connection to the chosen item is adapted to be displayed on a plurality of visual displays without regard to specific visual display technologies.

2. A method as described in claim 1, wherein the subject items comprise narrative text.

3. A method as described in claim 1, wherein the subject items comprise a sequence of a mathematic or chemical expression.

4. A method as described in claim 1, wherein the subject items comprises a data visualization comprising a collection of displayed graphic elements.

5. A method as described in claim 1, wherein the connection of the text annotation to the chosen item is a graphical connection.

6. A method as described in claim 1, wherein the encoded, computer readable format comprises a meta-media identifier.

7. A method as described in claim 1, wherein the encoding step further comprises encoding a time index representing the subject items' temporal position during an animated playback.

8. A method as described in claim 1, further comprising the step of highlighting the list of encoded, subject items that may be chosen.

9. A method as described in claim 1, further comprising the step of manually selecting the encoded, subject item.

10. A method as described in claim 1, further comprising choosing a plurality of encoded subject items and connecting to the chosen items a corresponding plurality of text annotations.

11. A method as described in claim 1, further comprising the step of distributing the text annotation and its connection to the chosen item to another visual display at a remote location.